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ABSTRACT

When Kentucky established a comprehensive reform of its schools in 1990, it targeted the nature of professional culture, norms, and activities in education. To explain this reform movement, a narrative analysis of research reports targeting various aspects of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act is reported here. The focus is on identified elements of professionalism: a requisite knowledge base, performance of a social service, broad powers of discretion in performance of a job, and collegial controls on admittance and retention in the profession. The research employed a form of narrative analysis and represents the first step in a synthesis of what is known about Kentucky's reform. The emphasis is on teachers' knowledge, on teachers' professional service, on teachers' professional judgment, and on collegial controls on admission and retention in the profession. It was found that many teachers do not have the knowledge base necessary for implementing most components of the statewide reform and are being evaluated in ways that they are poorly prepared to meet. It is hoped that by cross-synthesizing the various narratives of the reform initiatives, themes related to professionalism will be identified from the various studies of communities engaged in comprehensive state-mandated education reform. (Contains 51 references.) (RJM)

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Can State Reform Shape the Culture and Definition of Professionalism in Schools?

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Can State Reform Shape the Culture and Definition of Professionalism in Schools?

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Background

In 1990, the commonwealth of Kentucky established a "top-down/bottom-up", comprehensive reform package (*Quality Counts*, 1997). Undergirding specific initiatives in this massive reform effort, were fundamental assumptions about the nature of professional culture, norms, and activities in education (Foster, 1997, personal communication).[1] For example, high stakes accountability of schools to the state legislature and citizens was to be associated with considerable school-level discretion in the identification and development of curriculum and instruction (Task Force on Education Reform, 1989). Ironically, by shifting the unit of accountability from individual teachers and/or students to schools, the prominence of professionalism may have been diminished. In short, teachers may have bargained away the perks of professionalism by diffusing accountability from individuals and classrooms to schools. Thus, the "stick" in Kentucky's accountability system drove up the ante far higher than the "carrot" of school rewards (Kelley & Protsik, 1996).

Perspectives: Professionalism

Professionalism in teaching is fraught with tensions due to the public service nature of teachers' professional role (McClure & Lindle, 1997). The elements of professionalism have been discussed thoroughly elsewhere (Bull, 1990; Esland, 1980; Ginsburg, 1997, 1987; Johnson, 1972; Metzger, 1987; Soder, 1990; Wilenski, 1964). For the purposes of this paper, it is important to review the qualities of professionalism salient to teachers. The list includes the following:

- a requisite knowledge base
- performance of a social service

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[1] Jack Foster was then-Governor Wallace Wilkinson's Secretary for Education and instrumental in the design of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act.

- broad powers of discretion in performance of job
- collegial controls on admittance and retention in the profession (Metzger, 1987; Ginsburg, 1997; Sockett, 1990).

In this paper, I used reports of research on the various aspects of the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) to address these listed components of professionalism. I used a form of narrative analysis on a compendium of reports on KERA entitled, *The 1996 Review of Research on the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act* (Lindle, Petrosko & Pankratz, 1997).

Methods

For all practical purposes, this paper is a report of a narrative analysis of a volume of research reports on the 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act. Narrative analysis is a technique in which texts are examined for themes and concepts (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994). Hermeneutics is a form of narrative analysis which seeks to synthesize the inherent contradictions of text and context (DeAbascal-Hildebrand, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Hodder, 1994; Kearney, 1984; Kneller, 1984: Waldhart & Applegate, 1990). In other words, hermeneutics might be interpreted as reading both between the lines and outside of them. The narrative analysis that I performed on this volume is both inductive and interpretive — a means of synthesizing what knowledge may exist about school reform in general and KERA in particular (Noblit & Hare, 1988). My ultimate goal is as Noblit and Hare (1997) suggest:

> Interpretive accounts, above all, provided a perspective and, in doing so, achieve the goal of enhancing human discourse. (p.18)

For this paper, I analyzed the narratives of the compendium for the intent of reform related to the profession and for the voices of teachers. I was not only interested in what these narratives listed as teacher data, but I also wanted to discern the images of teachers that were promulgated by this volume. I wanted to test the teacher data and the images about teachers against the ideology of professionalism that was supposedly an underlying tenet of KERA.

Data Sources

The source for this paper was the latest compendium of research on the 1990 Kentucky

Education Reform Act (Lindle, Petrosko & Pankratz, 1997).The existence of such a compendium is unusual for any state. Fortunately for this paper, this 15 chapter volume describes the research extant as of January 1997 on Kentucky's various reform initiatives.

Each chapter is a synthesis of the cumulative published and unpublished reports and dissertations on a particular component of KERA. One advantage of this compendium is each chapter cites the relevant statute(s), associated regulations, and also research on the policy innovations. Consequently, each chapter provides a narrative of policy requirements and responses. One caveat on the chapters is that some duplicate each others' sources. That is, each chapter is not a repository of exclusive literature and research any more than KERA's initiatives are a set of mutually independent initiatives.

As extensive as the *1996 Review* is, it lacks one essential feature, and that is an integrated examination of the overall effects of the reform. Despite an executive summary, there are no general statements of KERA effects. There are only summaries of each initiative.

This is a serious omission because the context for each initiative is statewide and because the design for reform was systemic and integrated rather than incremental (ACCESS ERIC, 1994). At this point, the research in Kentucky has been limited to specific initiatives rather than being more comprehensive. This investigation is a first step in addressing a synthesis of what we know about Kentucky's reform overall. By cross-synthesizing the various narratives on each reform initiative found in the *1996 Review*, themes related to the components of professionalism were identified from various studies of Kentucky's school communities engaged in comprehensive state-mandated education reform.

A Requisite Knowledge Base

Concerns about teachers' knowledge are not centered in Kentucky. Such concerns echo across decades and across the globe. As Linda Darling-Hammond (1996) and others (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996) recently reminded us, students benefit from better prepared teachers.

The *1996 Review* had seven of 15 chapters that made some reference to teacher knowledge. The list of chapters relevant to teacher knowledge are presented in the Table 1.

The chapters on assessment, curriculum, primary program, and educational technology specifically mention studies that report teachers' awareness and/or complaints about their store of information that relate to implementing these initiatives. The chapters on the Kentucky Educational Professional Standards Board and professional development report on the legislation and regulations that would support teachers' development of a knowledge base for the mandated initiatives. The chapter on statewide surveys report, among other issues, teachers' and others' perceptions of teachers' readiness and competence in implementing school reform.

Table 1: Chapters Describing Teachers' Professional Knowledge Base

Chapter Title	Author(s) & Pages
Assessment & Accountability	J. M. Petrosko, pp. 3-50
Curriculum Reform	B. Matthews, pp. 51-77
Multicultural Education	B. Powell, pp. 79-99
Primary Program	E. McIntyre & D. Kyle, pp. 119-142
Education Technology	J. Mazur & D. Smith, pp. 155-168.
Professional Development	C. Cody & T. R. Guskey, pp. 191-209.
Educational Professional Standards Board	S. J. Scollay, pp. 213-231
What we have learned about school reform in Kentucky from statewide surveys	R. Pankratz, pp. 289-313.

One chapter is not listed in Table 1, and it is notable for its omission of any discussion of teacher knowledge either as a summary of mandated policy or as reports of teacher performance: the chapter on high school restructuring (Fischetti & Dittmer, 1997). These authors report that little was enacted into legislation concerning high school restructuring. Most of the changes for secondary schools are policies adopted by the state board of education, and little data has been collected or reported on the progress of high schools in restructuring education.

The other seven chapters that do mention teacher knowledge generally conclude that teachers require more preparation to address any and each of the aspects of Kentucky's school reform. Teachers are both generally and specifically confused or professionally insulted by the

state's assessment, curricular reform, the primary program, and educational technology (Pankratz, 1997).

Assessment and accountability have a high profile in accounts of teacher knowledge and understanding. In the chapter on assessment and accountability, teachers reportedly did not understand the accountability formula and felt that authentic assessment interfered with classroom instruction (Kannapel, Coe, Aagaard & Moore, 1996; Petrosko, 1997). Such remarks suggest that the assessments are far from "authentic" if so divorced from instruction. Teachers also felt that the requirement of accountability was a threat to their professionalism (Kannapel, et al, 1996).

Regarding curriculum reform, Matthews (1997) reported that while the legislation clearly offered a standards-based curriculum, large numbers of teachers reported either not using or not understanding the curriculum documents produced by the Kentucky Department of Education. Furthermore, at least one report indicated that teachers did not design curriculum broadly, instead they relied on, indeed felt constrained by, state assessment materials (Koretz, Barron, Mitchell & Stecher, 1996).

Teachers also are provoked by the state's requirements under the primary program. Most of the studies synthesized by McIntyre and Kyle (1997) indicated that teachers do not understand strategies for multi-age/ability grouping. Moreover, teachers do not use the approach of continuous progress for students in ungraded classrooms. Teachers complained that they did not have enough planning time or preparation for implementing the primary program. The implementation time line was too short according to most teachers (de Mesquita & Drake, 1994; Raths, Katz & Fanning, 1993).

Not surprisingly, educational technology also has implications for teachers' knowledge base. Mazur and Smith (1997) reported that teachers disclosed that receiving inadequate training for technology in the environment of high stakes assessment. A combination of flexible professional development with technology implementation was a preference.

Assessment, curriculum, the primary program, and educational technology all represent changes in teachers' jobs that obviously require new or extended teacher knowledge. KERA had provisions to address teacher development. Specifically KERA included provisions for a semi-

autonomous professional standards board (Scollay, 1997). KERA also provided increased money and school-level autonomy in designing and obtaining professional development (Cody & Guskey, 1997). Requirements for teacher development of awareness and sensitivity to multicultural issues also were included in statute (Powell, 1997).

Although the Kentucky Educational Professional Standards Board (EPSB), quickly promulgated standards for new teacher development, the standards for experienced teachers and school administrators, while developed and approved in 1994, have yet to be implemented. Little systematic research exists to explain what the effects of the EPSB has been on any of its stakeholders or the profession (Scollay, 1997).

Little, if any, work has been done on issues of multicultural awareness or sensitivity among Kentucky's teachers or in the state's classrooms (Powell, 1997). The Kentucky Department of Education has a Multicultural Opportunities Branch which holds workshops and institutes for teachers. Nothing is known of the effects of these activities beyond self-ratings of participants. Most participants reported that they have little or no training for full inclusion teaching strategies (Simms, 1996). Various Kentucky universities are studying the effects of their multicultural programs on prospective teachers, but little is known of the multicultural activities and curriculum found in public school classrooms (Powell, 1997).

The state of professional development fares slightly better. Few evaluation studies are complete, yet several reports contend that at least there has been more professional development opportunities for teachers than before KERA (Corcoran, 1995; Prichard Committee, 1995). The quality of these activities is questionable (Cody & Guskey, 1997).

In 1990, Kentucky's General Assembly codified the motto that all children, not can but, *will* learn (Foster, 1991). Despite some explicit statutes and a high stakes accountability system, Kentucky has yet to address the prerequisite for students' achievement, and that is, teacher knowledge. Without adequate teacher knowledge, teachers cannot, and *will not*, teach all children. For this component of professionalism, clearly Kentucky has plenty of remaining opportunities for capacity building in teacher knowledge. Until the knowledge base capacity is improved, the condition of teacher professionalism in Kentucky remains in question.

Performance of a Social Service

The *1996 Review* includes four chapters that correspond with education-based social services. Table 2 lists the chapters and the authors. Three of the chapters are reports on specific service programs mandated under KERA. The fourth chapter is a report of several state wide surveys of perceptions from teachers, other educators and the general public of how these programs are working.

Table 2: Chapters Describing Teachers' Professional Service

Chapter Title	Author(s) & Pages
The Kentucky Preschool Program	M. L. Hemmeter, pp. 101-117
Extended School Services	E. Orkorley & J.C. Drake, pp. 169-178
Family Resource & Youth Service Centers	S.M. Wilson & P.W. Roeder, pp. 179-189
What we have learned about school reform in Kentucky from statewide surveys	R. Pankratz, pp. 289-313.

The Kentucky Preschool program serves ages three- and four-year old students with disabilities and also four-year old children identified as disadvantaged by living in poverty.

By definition, this program serves children traditionally identified as at-risk or in need of public social services and schooling (Koppich, 1994; Reynolds, 1994). Unfortunately for the purposes of this paper, the chapter devoted to this program relies heavily on a single source of third party evaluation data on the program (Hemmeter, 1997). While data are available on some of the student effects of the program, there is little information on teacher effects, knowledge or performance. There is some information that teachers believe that the program is good and that they have support for working with students with disabilities. However, teachers apparently are less sanguine about working with children with severe disabilities or behavioral problems (Hemmeter, 1997). Arguably, this subset of students are perhaps those most in need of services from the profession.

Extended School Services, better known as ESS, was perhaps the earliest KERA program to be implemented in schools (Coe, Kannapel & Lutz, 1991; Lindle, 1995). It was designed for

"those students who are determined to need additional time to achieve the outcomes defined [in law]" (KRS 158.070, p. 217). Perhaps because of its early visibility, ESS has been perceived as a success by parents, teachers, and the general public (Okorley & Drake, 1997; Pankratz, 1997). On the other hand, early implementation is not the same accomplishment as competent implementation. Without clear specification of data sources, the chapter in the *1996 Review* devoted to ESS reports the following:

> The matter of instructional strategies and/or techniques appears to be a major concern of both regular and ESS teachers. The research suggests that schools do not consistently engage in strategies that lead to best programs for students, and that there is a greater need for entry and exit guidelines, individual goal setting, and strategies for early intervention. While regular education teachers expect ESS teachers to come up with a variety of teaching strategies, ESS teachers clamor for help on guidelines in developing instructional techniques for working with diverse learners. In addition, ESS teachers call for assistance in setting up a structure that would allow students to make optimal use of time. (Okorley & Drake, 1997, p.175)

Hence the authors of the ESS chapter in the *1996 Review* suggest that the core of teacher professionalism, a knowledge base, affects another component of professionalism, service.

Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSCs) were established in 1990 for Kentucky's elementary and secondary school students and their families. FRYSCs combine a number of services to students and families at risk and in need depending on the status and availability of local public and private service agencies and organizations. Most of the studies reported in the FRYSC chapter of the *1996 Review* focus on the efficacy and cost efficiency of service delivery through FRYSCs (Wilson & Roeder, 1997).

While a couple of studies studied the effects of FRYSCs on relations between communities and educators, the results were mixed. One study found that school and FRYSC officials responded to family issues in authoritarian and disabling ways (Rose and Shepard, 1994). The other study suggested that FRYSC activities improved school and community relations (Smrekar, 1994). Wilson and Roeder (1997) also reviewed the underlying ideology that might explain such contrasting results in work by Lindle and Bolland (1996). In sum, though

teachers are the front line of service delivery to children, most simply are not prepared to address the diverse social service needs presented by children and families.

All three chapters suggest that the service components of KERA, while viewed as worthy and at least partially successful by most constituents, are embedded with issues of professionalism for many teachers. The most prominent issue is that teachers' knowledge base may not have prepared them for the service components of schooling or school reform.

Broad Powers of Discretion in Performance of Job

The third area of professionalism considered in the context of the *1996 Review* is the aspect of professionalism in which the specialist is given broad latitude to exercise informed judgment in job performance. Two chapters review KERA and its efforts to promote this component of professionalism, and two other chapters report on the effects of KERA on teachers' professional judgment. Table 3 lists the relevant chapters and authors.

Table 3: Chapters Describing Teachers' Professional Judgment

Chapter Title	Author(s) & Pages
Chapters describing KERA provisions:	
Educational Professional Standards Board	S. J. Scollay, pp. 213-231
School-Based Decision Making	J.C. Lindle, pp. 245-267
Chapters describing KERA effects:	
Assessment & Accountability	J. M. Petrosko, pp. 3-50
Curriculum Reform	B. Matthews, pp. 51-77

The EPSB, described briefly, above replaced an advisory board composed of deans of the colleges and schools of education in public and private higher education institutions across Kentucky. One of its first acts under KERA was to establish a Code of Professional Ethics in May 1991 (Scollay, 1997). Although the code itself describes standards for ethical behavior, it is primarily concerned with the relationships that teachers have with students and school constituents. It does not form a platform for ethical professional decision making because its

primary purpose is to provide grounds for revocation, suspension, and dismissal of certification cases (Scollay, 1997).

School-based decision making, or SBDM, however, is a fundamental link in the KERA system of accountability and high stakes assessment (Foster, 1991; Lindle, 1997; Task Force on Education Reform, 1989). The unit of accountability is the school and the unit for decision making is the school. SBDM Councils are composed of principals, teachers and parents in the following configuration (or multiples of it): one administrator, three teachers and two parents.

KERA allows broad powers of policy development and decision making related to curriculum and instruction. Most studies cited in this chapter, reveal that councils initially concerned themselves with matters ancillary to instruction and curriculum, and that when educators dominated councils, little discussion of instruction and curriculum occurred (Coe & Kannapel, 1993; David, 1994).

Perhaps most germane to this study is the SBDM chapter's discussion of power relocating from district offices to the principal's office. Teachers are concerned about the participation of parents — a lay group — in the making of professional decisions, but teachers are most vocal about the ways that principals dominate and exercise position power in the decision making process (Lindle, 1997). So, in the pecking order of SBDM councils, the professionals divert the agenda away from instructional and curriculum to co-opt parents in the decision making process, and principals, in turn, intimidate teachers and subvert the professional teaching agenda for an administrative one.

Perchance the most telling perceptions about KERA's effects on teacher judgment are found when we revisit the chapters on assessment/accountability and curriculum reform. In both chapters of the *1996 Review*, the voices of teachers are clear and remonstrative. As to assessment and accountability, teachers complain that their choices for teaching are given short shrift by the demands for portfolios and other aspects of the state's assessment (Petrosko, 1997). For example, they complain that by attending to writing portfolios, they do not have enough time to teach grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Koretz, et al. 1996; Wilkerson & Associates, 1996).

Though a casual observer might wonder how one could "teach" a writing portfolio without addressing grammar, punctuation, and spelling, the *1996 Review's* chapter on curriculum reform sheds some light on this apparently contradictory statement. Teachers and other school personnel and constituents believe that basic skills are ignored in Kentucky's version of standards-based reform (Wilkerson & Associates, 1997).

On the other hand, there is evidence that some schools and teachers have found KERA's approach to school-level curriculum productive. Some teachers report using national standards in certain subjects, such as math, to augment the state's curriculum framework (Matthews, 1997). Also, there is evidence that the Kentucky Department of Education has successfully provided guidance to schools deemed, through its accountability formula, in-decline or in-crises. These particular schools have been part of the School Transformation Assistance and Renewal (STAR) program which includes intervention by a Distinguished Educator. Because Distinguished Educators have apparently been productive in guiding SBDM Councils to develop improved curriculum and disseminating better instructional strategies, at least one report suggests that this model might improve professional development as well as the exercise of professional judgment (Kentucky Institute for Education Research, 1997).

To summarize, the issue of teacher professional judgment was addressed under KERA with two mechanisms, the Educational Professional Standards Board (EPSB) and School-Based Decision Making Councils (SBDM). Though the EPSB established a code of ethics, it does not address issues of professional judgment. Whereas most schools have established SBDM Councils, evidence suggests that these councils are not exercising powers related to instruction and curriculum. A couple of barriers to the exercise of these powers are a resistance by teachers to including parents as "lay" constituents in the discourse on instruction and curriculum as well as dominance of principals over both teachers and parents in the SBDM process.

Because neither of these decision structures are operating well, the default is the state assessment and accountability system. Assessment is driving curriculum and instruction. When the state intervenes and bolsters SBDM, it also leaves a decision making model for curriculum and instruction that is bound to the assessment and accountability system. The question arises, is

the high stakes assessment environment an impediment to, or an excuse for a lack of, teachers practicing their professional judgment under KERA?

Collegial Controls on Admittance to and Retention in the Profession

A chapter we have already visited in this essay pertains to the collegial nature of the teaching profession: the Educational Professional Standards Board. The EPSB is a creature of the assessment/accountability system in that its chief purpose under KERA seems to be review of license revocation cases.

The EPSB is composed of 15 members, 13 of which are appointed by the governor. Eight are classroom teachers, two are practicing school administrators, two are representatives of college or university-based teacher education programs and one is a local school board members. The other two members are ex-officio representing the governing body for higher education and the Kentucky Commissioner of Education. Most of the nominations for the eight teacher-members are provided to the governor by the largest teacher organization in the commonwealth, the Kentucky Education Association, an affiliate of the National Education Association. Kentucky is a non-bargaining state for public employees (Scollay, 1997).

While the EPSB has adopted a standards-based model for professional preparation and an assessment system for certification, its activities have been characterized by fits and starts regarding the certification process. New teacher standards were quickly implemented, but standards for other professional positions while adopted, are still pending regulations that would enable implementation (Scollay, 1997). Furthermore, because the new standards for certification affect other parts of the political system — colleges and universities, governing agencies, and professional organizations — the EPSB has found it difficult to unilaterally enforce its certification standards. To make the situation more complicated, the EPSB's executive director is an employee of the Kentucky Department of Education and besides being accountable to the EPSB, must report to the Commissioner of Education. The necessity of reporting to two bosses can be a problem for the most skilled diplomat, but this position has turned over four times in the last six years. Another source of drag on the work of the EPSB is the rapid turnover of EPSB

members — every year one third of its members change, and the lag for new members' learning curve has an effect on the EPSB's performance (Scollay, 1997).

Despite these problems with professional policy development for admitting people to the profession, the EPSB has been quite active in reviewing and settling disputes over certification. During the 1995-96 fiscal year, the EPSB handled 158 decisions relating to license revocation suspensions and reviews of character and fitness. On average, since its inception, the EPSB has handled well over 900 license disputes (Scollay, 1997). Perhaps this raises a question about how the rate of dispute settlement affects the policy process.

Conclusions

If the fundamental ideology of KERA is professionalism, the image and voices of teachers that emerge from this compendium is that most in the profession don't "get it." The fundamental misunderstanding of teachers about how accountability is a component of professionalism may be directly related to extensive evidence in the *1996 Review* that teachers do not have the knowledge base necessary for implementing most of the components of KERA. Even the concept of a service ethic in the profession is undermined by teachers' confessions that they do not have the necessary strategies for serving the neediest children.

Because KERA sets the high standard that all children will learn, teachers feel abused by the high stakes accountability system where they admit they do not know how to teach all children and by assessments which prevent them from teaching what they do know how to teach. In short, teachers' reported resistance to KERA may be a less disturbing problem than professionals with bad attitudes. Instead such troubles may represent a more disquieting example of unfair labor practices. That is, teachers are being evaluated under KERA in ways that they are poorly prepared to meet.

In other words, despite an attempt to portray teachers as a highly trained group of professionals who can address student learning with an expert repertoire, what we hear from Kentucky's teachers is the grievances of a work force that is not prepared to adapt to new technologies and performance standards. Kentucky's reform may be underpinned by

professionalism, but the teaching force lacks a fundamental requirement of a profession — a knowledge base that can respond to increasing demands for accountability and adaptability.

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